Perceptual experience and correctness conditions
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Abstract: Most philosophers of perception would agree that in perceptual experience things are presented to us as being a certain way(s). Most would agree, in addition, that there is a sense in which perceptual experience has veridicality or correctness conditions, and are likely to say that an experience is veridical to the extent that the world is the way it is presented to the subject in the experience as being. It is natural, then, to think that some specification of an experience’s correctness conditions should capture accurately the way things are presented to the subject in her experience as being, and it seems that, generally, most philosophers of perception make this assumption (though often only implicitly). My aim in this paper is to offer reasons for rejecting this assumption and the view of the relation between correctness conditions and experiential presentation that goes with it. I argue that there is a significant phenomenal difference between two types of ways in which information about the environment is made available to the subject in her experience, and that a specification in terms of correctness conditions alone cannot capture this difference accurately.

In perceptual experience things are presented to us as being a certain way; for example, an object can be presented in one’s visual experience as being cubical, red, located slightly to the left of straight-ahead, in front of a blue cube, etc. The question I am concerned with in this paper is how we should characterize the way objects are presented to us as being in a given visual experience, if we wish to capture accurately the way they are presented to the subject as being in the experience in question. There is one aspect of this question on which there seems to be wide agreement; it is, at least implicitly, widely assumed that it is possible to capture accurately the way things are presented to the subject as being by specifying the experience’s correctness conditions (call this view ‘the correctness conditions view’, CC for short). The aim of this paper is to offer reasons for rejecting CC.

In a nutshell, my claim is that by specifying the correctness conditions of an experience one specifies which information is made available to the subject in it, but that the following claim is false: whenever the information that a seen object is $F$ is made (immediately) available to the subject in an experience, it is also correct that from the subject’s perspective the object is presented in the experience as being $F$. I suggest that
the following two claims are correct. (i) For some properties, the (immediate) availability (to the subject) of the information that a seen object has the property is due to the fact that the object is presented in the experience as having it. (ii) There are properties for which the (immediate) availability of the information that a seen object has the property, say $F$, is a matter of a potential for discrimination (between the $F$ object and non-$F$s) in certain circumstances, *while it is inaccurate to say that the object is presented to the subject, in her experience, as being $F$. I then argue that if, as I suggest, our experience ordinarily provides us with information regarding properties of both types, then a specification of correctness conditions cannot accurately capture the way things are presented to us in experience as being.

I’ll proceed as follows. In §1 I briefly describe the philosophical background. In §2 I develop the above-mentioned argument for cases in which the subject’s acuity with respect to a certain dimension (e.g., shape, colour, etc.) depends on the specific values of constantly varying conditions such as the subject’s distance from the experienced objects, the lighting conditions, etc. In §3 I consider whether there is a way for CC to avoid the problem raised in §2, and point out difficulties that make this unlikely. Finally, in §4, I clarify that the problem raised in §2 permeates visual experience, and briefly point towards two possible alternatives to CC.

Before I start, I should mention two points. First, I discuss only visual experience; thus by ‘experience’ I’ll mean visual experience. Second, to simplify the discussion, I focus on the presentation of particular objects. However, I take the discussion to apply equally to any other type of particular which can be presented to us in experience (e.g., events, aspects and parts of objects, etc.).
1. Background

Usually, when philosophers discuss the question of how to characterize the way things are presented in experience as being, they focus on how to capture features that distinguish perceptual representations from linguistic ones – e.g., the fine-grainedness and richness of our perceptual experience. As far as I know, the philosophers who discuss such questions all take it for granted that what we need in order to characterize how things are presented to the subject as being in a given experience is a certain specification of the correctness conditions of that experience; correctness condition being the conditions which, if they obtain, the experience is veridical, and for any aspect of these conditions which doesn’t obtain, the experience is non-veridical in a relevant respect. The standard thought seems to be that an experience is veridical to the extent that things are the way they are presented to the subject in the experience as being, and therefore that there should be a specification of the correctness conditions which is a specification of the way things are presented to the subject as being. (That this is the standard way of thinking, which is usually simply taken for granted, is reflected by the fact that most discussions of the issue are described as concerning ‘the content of perceptual experience’, where such content is supposed to be both something that has correctness conditions, and also something that captures how the environment is presented to the subject as being.¹)

On such a view, what is needed in order to specify accurately the way things are presented to the subject as being is a device which, like a predicate, would (at least in principle) enable specification of correctness conditions, only that it has to enable a specification of the correctness conditions characteristic of perceptual experience. Peacocke’s ‘scenario’ is an example of such a device: the way it is related to the

¹ See especially Peacocke 1989,1992. Note that philosophers, such as Travis 2004 and Brewer 2011, who reject ascribing content to experience don’t reject CC, but rather simply deny that things are presented in experience as being this or that way.
correctness conditions of an experience is similar to the way a predicate is related to the truth conditions of an utterance.\textsuperscript{2} A scenario determines a certain set of (fine-grained) ways in which the scene around a subject could be (specifically, it determines for each visible location around the subject whether there is something at that location, and if so, a set of ways it can be – e.g., a set of orientations, shades of colour, etc.). This set of ways, then, constitutes the range of conditions in which the experience is wholly veridical. Thus, if the content of an experience $e$ of a subject $S$, which takes place at time $t$, is captured by a certain scenario $x$, then $e$ is wholly veridical if the way the scene around $S$ at $t$ is is among the ways a scene can be which $x$ determines; and for any aspect of the scene which isn’t in the corresponding set of ways, the experience is non-veridical in a relevant respect.

Whatever philosophers think about the details of Peacocke’s view, there seems to be a general agreement that a scenario is an example of the kind of device we need in order to characterize how things are presented to the subject as being; i.e., it is agreed that what we need is simply a special way of specifying correctness conditions.\textsuperscript{3,4} It is exactly this assumption that I want to challenge. I’ll argue that a specification of the correctness conditions of an experience, on its own, will not capture accurately the way things are presented to the subject (in experience) as being; thus showing that we should reject CC – i.e., the view that some specification of the correctness conditions can accurately capture the way an object is presented to the subject as being.

\textsuperscript{2} Peacocke 1992: 60ff.
\textsuperscript{3} Thus, for example, when authors provide an overview of the discussions of whether the content of experience is conceptual, they often present Peacocke’s scenarios as ‘the most fully developed current theory of nonconceptual content’ (Crane, 1992:154; see also Bermudez and Cahen, 2008), or simply mention it as an example, without ever mentioning the possibility that this isn’t the right kind of device for capturing the way things are presented as being from the subject’s perspective.
\textsuperscript{4} For accuracy’s sake, I should mention that Peacocke doesn’t suggest that scenarios alone are sufficient for capturing the correctness conditions of our experiences; on his view, fully capturing the correctness conditions requires taking into account further levels of content (in addition to scenarios).
Note that my claim isn’t merely that correctness conditions don’t accurately capture the way things are presented to the subject in experience. But rather that it doesn’t capture the way they are presented to the subject as being. Thus I’m not concerned with what is known as the question of whether experience is transparent – i.e., whether the way experienced objects are presented as being fully determines the phenomenal character of the experience (i.e., what it is like, for the subject, to have the experience), where the opposing view is that the phenomenal character is also determined by intrinsic characteristics of the experience, such as the special characteristics that are unique to experiences in a specific sense modality, or to certain malfunctioning of the subject’s perceptual system, etc. Occasionally, for brevity’s sake, I use shortened formulations like ‘the way things are presented to the subject’; such formulation should be read as referring to the way things are presented to the subject, in experience, as being.

Note also that I’m not denying that our experience can be said to have correctness conditions, and that these correctness conditions vary with variations in the way experienced objects are presented as being. Talk about the way an object is presented as being is meant to capture an aspect of the experience in virtue of which certain information rather than other is made available to the subject in the given experience. (‘Information’ is used here rather loosely; very roughly, by ‘the information available in a particular experience’ I mean that which the relevant experience, on its own, can contribute to what the subject is entitled to take to be the case. I thus use the term to refer to both correct and incorrect informational contents.) An experience counts as veridical or not according to whether the information made available to the subject in that experience is misleading. Thus, variations in the way things are presented to the subject as being entails variations in correctness conditions.

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5 For an example of this kind of debate see Tye 2003.
Finally, let me clarify that although my example of a device for specifying correctness conditions has been Peacocke’s scenario, and the scenario is offered by Peacocke as a device for specifying non-conceptual aspects of perceptual content, my discussion is meant to be entirely independent from the question of whether the content of perceptual experience is conceptual or not. What determines whether a given specification of perceptual content is of conceptual or of non-conceptual content is whether (i) there is a relevant correspondence between the terms that are used in the specification and the perceiver’s conceptual capacities, and (ii) it is suggested that possessing these conceptual capacities is necessary for the perceiver to have an experience with the content in question (or a stronger conditions which also specifies a particular reason for the necessity of the conceptual capacities). Thus there seems to be no inconsistency in suggesting that one can use scenarios in the specification of perceptual contents that are supposed to be conceptual. Furthermore, Peacocke’s discussion of John McDowell and Bill Brewer’s conceptual view suggests that he would agree that scenarios could be used in such a specification. In response to the worry that the conceptualist cannot capture the fine-grainedness of our perceptual experience, McDowell and Brewer suggest that demonstrative concepts capture exactly the right fine-grainedness. Peacocke agrees, and as I understand him, he thus agrees that the content he specifies by means of scenarios can equally be captured by relevant demonstrative contents (contents resulting from the operation of demonstrative concepts). Peacocke’s main objection to the conceptualist is that they get the order of explanation wrong. According to him, the ways in which objects can be experienced as being – the ways that figure in scenario content – play a role in the account of specific

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6 See for example Peacocke 2001:244-50.
8 For example, Peacocke 2001:250.
demonstrative concept, and to play such a role they must be non-conceptual. The conceptualist, on the other hand, might wish to use scenarios in order to specify demonstrative modes of presentation, but he would emphasize that by doing this he isn’t describing an aspect of the experience that is independent of its being an aspect of conceptual capacity. I am emphasizing the independence from the conceptual/non-conceptual issue because I take it that if our experiences have specifiable correctness conditions, the specification will have to make use of something like Peacocke’s scenarios, and I’ll assume that proponents of CC share this view. What I’m emphasizing is that this doesn’t commit them to a specific position regarding the conceptual/non-conceptual issue.

My claim, to repeat, is that mere specification of correctness conditions doesn’t capture accurately the way things are presented to the subject (i.e., from her perspective). Specifically, I suggest that (i) in addition to cases in which the information that an object has a certain property, $F$, is available to the subject in experience due to the object being presented to her in her experience as being $F$, there are also cases of a different sort. There are, in addition, cases in which the information that an object has a certain property, $F'$, is available to the subject even though it is more accurate to say that the object isn’t presented to her as being $F'$. Instead, the availability of this bit of information (that the object is $F'$) is a matter of a potential for certain discriminations in certain circumstances. (ii) CC cannot capture accurately the phenomenal difference between the two types of cases. I turn now to my argument for these claims.

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9 See also 1992, e.g., pp.12-13 & 67-8.
2. Acuity and the way things are presented as being

One’s experience of an object varies with two kinds of factors: (i) the visible properties of the object, and (ii) a variety of conditions such as the lighting, the spatial relations between the subject, the object and other visible objects, the distribution of the subject’s attention, etc. (I’ll use ‘e-conditions’ to refer, generally, to conditions of this type). In several cases variation in e-conditions have a systematic effect on the amount and specificity of information available to the subject in the experience from the object’s visible properties. For example, variations in the subject’s distance from the object affect her acuity with respect to shape, size, orientation, and other properties; it, thus, affects the amount and specificity of the information regarding these dimensions (i.e., shape, size, etc.) which is available to her in the experience. (Note that ‘specificity’ here is meant to refer to what is often referred to as ‘determinacy’: how specific the information is relative to other bits of information regarding a given dimension, or in other words, the location of the predicates needed for specifying it on a scale of determinate-determinable relations. I avoid using ‘determinancy’ to prevent confusion with regard to the question of whether the information can be said to be determinate in the sense that it concerns determinate properties: properties which, for any given object, it is determined whether or not it has the property in question). In this and the next sections I argue that CC cannot capture accurately the effect of constantly changing e-conditions on the way objects are presented to the subject as being. In this section I show how the problem arises in cases in which what varies with variations in e-conditions is the subject’s acuity with respect to a certain dimension. I’ll focus on the example of the effect of the distance between subject and object on acuity with respect to shape. Since the considerations I discuss are not specific to the example, the conclusion can be generalized.
Consider a case in which a subject is viewing an object, say, a daisy, from a distance $d_1$ (suppose it is, roughly, 3m). Assuming the conditions are generally normal, the shape-information which is available to the subject from the daisy from this distance is less specific than the shape-information from the daisy which would be available from a closer distance (other things being equal). Figure 1, in which $d_i > d_{i+1}$ (1≤i≤4), provides a rough demonstration of the kind of change in the way the daisy is presented as being which corresponds to this change in acuity that occurs when the subject’s distance from the daisy decreases.

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. This is, of course, only a very rough demonstration. First, there are some slight changes in conditions other than the camera’s distance from the daisy – e.g., slight changes in light intensity – whereas the example I want to focus on is one in which all other conditions remain unchanged. Secondly, the acuity of the photographs was also affected by variations in the stability of the camera. Thirdly, and most importantly, I do not think that the information available in the photograph is exactly the same as the information available in a corresponding experience.

My claim is that CC cannot capture accurately the changes in the way the daisy is presented to the subject as being which figure 1 is meant to demonstrate, and thus also it cannot capture the way the daisy’s shape is presented to the subject as being when seen from any specific distance.

To examine what proponents of CC might say here, we need, first, to spell out how the relevant changes in distance affect the correctness conditions of the experience. Consider the initial situation, where the subject’s distance from the object is $d_1$. The
experience provides the subject with shape-information which is specific up to a certain
degree: a given experience puts the subject in a position to distinguish the shape of the
daisy at the time from a wide variety of other shapes (i.e., she is in a position to
distinguish it, in favourable conditions, from instances of these other shapes), but not
from all shapes which are in principle distinguishable from it in vision. (I’ll shortly
come back to what exactly is involved in being in such a position. At present I should
point out that with regard to some shapes the subject is merely more, or less, likely to
distinguish the daisy’s shape from them. For simplicity’s sake I’ll often omit reference
to this fact). Now, generally, when the subject moves closer to the daisy (other things
being equal), the shape-information available to her in the experience is more specific
than it was in the initial situation; i.e., when the distance between the subject and the
object is, say, $d_2 (d_2 < d_1)$, the subject is in a position to distinguish the daisy’s shape
from more shapes than she was in a position to distinguish from distance $d_1$ (or, for
some of the shapes, more likely to do so). Moving further away will, of course, have the
opposite effect.

If we think of shapes as ordered in a multi-dimensional similarity-space, we can
express the situation as follow. For each experience of an object there is a certain range
of shapes in the similarity-space, $R_i$, such that the experience is correct with respect to
shape if the experienced object’s shape is within $R_i$, and is incorrect in this respect if it
isn’t within $R_i$ (where $R_i$ can have fuzzy boundaries). Now, let $R_1$ be the range of shapes
which are consistent with the correctness of the experience from $d_1$, $R_2$ the range of
shapes consistent with the correctness of the experience from $d_2$, etc. $R_1$ is wider than
and includes $R_2$, $R_2$ is wider than and includes $R_3$, etc. In other words, $R_1 \supset R_2 \supset R_3 \supset \ldots$
(i.e., $R_2$ is a proper subset of $R_1$, $R_3$ is a proper subset of $R_2$, etc.).
According to CC, there should be a way of specifying the correctness conditions which completely captures how the object is presented to the subject as being. It, thus, seems that proponents of CC should say that the object is presented to the subject as having a shape-property which is more coarse-grained than the shape-properties which would have been presented to her had she been closer to the object, other things being equal, and more fine-grained than the shape which would have been presented to her had she been further away, where each pair of these properties relate to each other as a determinate or a determinable of the other.

Going one step further, the natural view for proponents of CC to hold is that the object is experienced as being $F_i$, where $F_i$ is the property of being shaped in a way which is within range $R_i$. According to this view (which I’ll call ‘the $F$-properties view’), when the distance changes from $d_1$ to $d_2$, etc. (other things being equal), the shape property which the object is presented to the subject as having (or, at least, the most specific shape property it is presented to the subject as having) changes from a less fine-grained to a more fine-grained one; namely, from $F_1$ to $F_2$, etc. Or, to put things in a somewhat more intuitive manner, the suggestion is that as the distance decreases, finer $F$-properties possessed by the object become visible to the subject while the (relevant) coarser ones cease to be visible to her (and vice versa when the distance increases).\(^{10}\)

I want to argue that the $F$-properties view doesn’t capture accurately the way things are presented from the subject’s perspective. A more accurate description of the change in the way an object is presented when acuity with respect to shape changes due to change in distance may go, roughly, like this. From the subject’s perspective: she is presented with the object and its shape,\(^ {11}\) and is provided with information regarding this

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\(^{10}\) Note that the argument below applies equally to the view according to which finer properties become visible when the distance decreases, and the relevant coarser ones remain visible.

\(^{11}\) So far I’ve used ‘property’ and ‘shape’ to refer to general principles of grouping, which could be more or less fine-grained. Here, however, I use ‘shape’ to refer to the particular instance – the shape of a
shape which is specific up to a certain degree and could be made more specific if she moves closer to the object, other things being equal (and similarly, if the light turns brighter, etc.). Further, when she moves closer (other things being equal), from her perspective: she is still presented with the object and its (unchanged) shape, and what changes is that her experience provides her with more specific shape-information. In §4 I’ll say more about the sense in which it can be correct to describe aspects of how things are from the subject’s perspective by means of phrases such as ‘she is provided, by her experience, with shape-information which is specific up to a certain degree/more specific/etc.’. In the meantime, one may interpret this as capturing things like the object’s shape appearing to the subject in a more, or less, detailed manner, or simply its being seen more clearly, or even just its being seen from a better standpoint – where there is a sense in which it is part of the phenomenology that the acuity is restricted to a certain degree and could be changed by her doing things like moving towards the object, etc.12 (I leave open the question of whether the relevant part of the phenomenology should be construed as an aspect of the content of the visual experience, or whether it should be taken to be, at least partly, an aspect of a more general attitude of the subject towards the content). The opposing view, remember, is that the change is a change in $F$-properties.

particular object, in general (i.e., regardless of shape-classifications). The latter falls under several $F$-properties which differ from each other in their fine-grainedness. In what follows the context is usually sufficient to make clear in what sense ‘shape’ and ‘property’ are used (specifically, it is only when ‘property’/‘shape’ are used in the former sense that properties/shapes are said to be possessed by objects); when this might be unclear, or when I wish to emphasize the ‘instance sense’ I’ll use ‘an object’s property/shape’ or ‘property-instance’. When I wish to emphasize uses in the ‘classificatory sense’, I’ll say that the property/shape are of a certain fineness of grain. It should be clear that none of this entails any metaphysical commitments with regard to the relation between properties and their instances. Note, also, that I use ‘property’ to refer to any n-place relation.

12 When I already had a complete draft of this paper I came across a description of a project on shape constancy, run by Sean Kelly at his Philosophical Psychology Lab (http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ppl/Projects.html), which expresses a similar view of the phenomenology. The hypothesis in this project is that the change in the way a shape looks to a subject when she views it from different angles ‘consists in the perceiver’s own sense of having a better or worse experience of the shape.’
You may wonder whether what I presented in the last paragraph as an alternative to the $F$-properties view isn’t just a different description, at a different level of generality, of the same way in which things can be presented to the subject as being. For it may seem that when I say that from the subject’s perspective she is ‘provided with information regarding the shape which is specific up to a certain degree’ it must be the case that the way the object is presented implies a particular degree of the specificity of the information – the degree that varies when the subject moves towards or away from the object. It may, further, seem that the only plausible way this could be so is if the object is presented as having a shape which is within a certain range $R_n$ (rather than any other range), and that this is just the same as saying that the object is presented as being shaped in a way which is within $R_n$ – i.e., as having the relevant $F$-type property, $F_n$. However, as I’ll now argue, only the more general level of descriptions captures accurately the way things are presented to the subject as being.

My argument against the $F$-properties view can be, roughly, outlined as follows.

(i) There is a significant phenomenal difference between, on the one hand, the paradigmatic cases in which we would say that an object is presented in experience as having a property of a certain fineness of grain, and on the other hand, the relevant aspect of the phenomenology that changes when acuity with respect to a certain dimension varies with constantly changing e-conditions (such as the subject’s distance from the object).

(ii) This phenomenal difference gives us good reasons for denying that in cases of the latter type the object is presented to the subject as being/having the property $F_i$.

To see that (i) is true, consider what seems to be paradigmatic cases in which we say that an object is presented in experience as having shape-property $F$ – i.e., a specific shape-property of a certain fineness of grain. Examples of such cases are an object being presented as being curved rather than, say, angular, etc., or as being circular rather than,
say, elliptical, etc., and also as being what we may describe as ‘daisy-shaped’ (a relatively coarse-grained shape, shared by all ordinary daisies, by several other flowers of the Asteraceae family, several models of flowers, etc.) rather than, say, circular, star-shaped, etc. In other dimensions we have cases like an object being presented as having a certain colour (say, red) rather than others (green, blue, etc.), an object being oriented vertically, rather than horizontally, etc. (Note that I’m assuming that, ordinarily, if a property is such that objects can be presented to us in experience as having it, it is associated with a class of properties of the same dimension which are such that: (a) each of them is a property that objects can be presented to us as having, (b) they are mostly mutually exclusive, or at least their perceptual presentations are, and (c) they are ordinarily of a quite similar fineness of grain).

Reflection on such cases suggests a clear sense in which, in these cases, the experience makes the possession of the relevant property by the object immediately manifest to the subject – i.e., manifest to the subject without a need of any further activity: inference, calculation, or further perceptual activity. In other words, there is a sense in which experience makes the aspect in virtue of which the object resembles any other thing that shares the property – e.g., any other circular or round or daisy-shaped or red thing – immediately manifest to the subject. This manifestness is what accounts for the fact that when an object is presented to us in experience as being, say, circular, we immediately see its resemblance to any other thing that is presented to us as circular, and are immediately in a position to recognize it as circular (in our own case, such recognition ordinarily involves being disposed to apply the concept of circularity in relevant ways, but in creatures without concepts it may involve merely being disposed to group the object with circular objects observed in the past or future in normal conditions).
In contrast, when changes in e-conditions affect acuity with respect to a given dimension, there is no corresponding immediate manifestation of the relevant $F_i$-properties – i.e., the properties whose mentioning in the specification of the correctness conditions is supposed to capture the fine changes in appearance that are due to the relevant changes in e-conditions. Consider, for example, what happens in the daisy-example with $F_1$-$F_5$. We are assuming that the experience from each $d_i$ ($1 \leq i \leq 5$) provides the subject with the information that the daisy’s shape is somewhere within range $R_i$, thus the experience from each $d_i$ provides the subject with the information that the daisy’s shape is $F_i$. However, the similarity between the daisy and other things that are, say, $F_3$ (rather than things that aren’t $F_3$; especially, things that are $F_2$ but not $F_3$, or are some other $F_i$-property which is defined by a range that is very close to $R_3$ but doesn’t fully coincide with it) isn’t something that is immediately manifest to the subject when she sees the daisy from $d_3$. To see this, suppose that when the subject sees our original daisy ($D$) from the distance of $d_3$, she also sees two other daisies, $D^\varphi$ and $D^\psi$, where $D^\varphi$ is $F_2$ but not $F_3$ and $D^\psi$ is $F_3$ ($D$, remember, is $F_1, F_2, F_3, F_4$, and $F_5$). Suppose further that the subject’s distance from $D^\varphi$ and from $D^\psi$ is $d_3$, and that she attends to each of them for a couple of minutes in exactly the same manner, while all other conditions which can affect her acuity with regard to the shape of the relevant daisy, are just the same as the ones that obtain when she attends to $D$ and her experience provides her with the information that it ($D$) is within range $R_3$. The subject’s experience when she attends to $D^\varphi$, then, should provide her with the information that $D^\varphi$ is within range $R_3$, and her experience of $D^\psi$, when she attends to it, should provide her with the information that it is within some range $R^* \neq R_3$ (in particular, close enough to be a sub-range of $R_2$) but doesn’t coincide with $R_3$. According to the $F$-properties view, then, when attending to each, the subject experiences, in turn, $D$ and $D^\varphi$ as being $F_3$, and $D^\psi$ as being
$F_\ast$. However, the difference between $R_3$ and $R^\ast$ is very fine, and thus the difference in shape between an object that is $F_3$ and one that is $F_\ast$ is of the type which we can detect in experience only in very special conditions. For example, normally, the relevant objects would need to be adjacent to each other, equally oriented, etc. And even this might not be enough; the more complex the shape, the more likely it is that the difference can be detected only by carefully attending to an object’s shape when it changes (at some medium pace) from $F_3$ to $F_\ast$ or vice versa, or by somehow superimposing the shapes of the relevant objects.

Suppose you agree that this is clearly not a case in which D’s being $F_3$ is immediately manifest to the subject in her experience. You may, then, wonder how it could still be the case that the experience in question can be said to provide the subject with the information that D is $F_3$. The answer, I suggest, is that although the current experience doesn’t make D’s being $F_3$ immediately manifest to the subject, it provides the basis for a potential for discriminating D’s current shape from shapes that aren’t $F_3$ in a certain set of circumstances. More specifically, there are certain aspects of the current perceptual relation between the subject and the object that make it the case that, other things being equal (including the distribution of the subject’s attention), the subject is able to detect certain changes in D’s shape – e.g., a change (at a relevant pace) from being $F_3$ to being $F_\ast$ – and not able (or less likely) to detect others – e.g., a change (at the same pace) from being $F_3$ to being $F_0$, where $R_0$ is a proper subset of $R_3$ but not of $R_4$. Furthermore, D’s shape might be simple enough for these aspects to also enable the subject to detect a difference in shape, between D and non-$F_3$s, provided the latter are

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13 The assumption mentioned on p.13 as to what is required for a property to be presentable in experience explains why if $F_3$ is presentable some property that fits the characterization of $F_\ast$ should be so too.

14 As a simple demonstration of this point think of two straws that differ slightly in length, where the difference is visually detectable only when the two straws are seen lying parallel and very close together.
positioned in a relevant favourable relation to D, the subject pays sufficient attention to the relation between their shapes, etc.\textsuperscript{15} As the experience provides the basis for this specific discrimination potential, we have a sense in which the experience provides the subject with the information that the object’s shape is within a certain (fuzzily-bounded) range $R_3$, and thus that it is $F_3$. An experience that provides the basis for more (or less) fine-grained potential discriminations can thus be said to provide more (or less) specific information regarding the shape. Note that proponents of CC cannot deny that this sense of ‘information being provided to the subject’ is relevant to determining the experience’s correctness conditions. The relevant changes in the potential for discrimination are the way in which the fine changes in acuity show up in the experience, and clearly the correctness conditions must change with the relevant changes in acuity. In fact, philosophers who discuss the specification of correctness conditions usually take difference in potential for discrimination in favourable conditions to be the criterion for difference in correctness conditions (see, in particular, Peacocke 1989, 1992).\textsuperscript{16}

What aspects of the perceptual relation between the subject and the object account for the potential for discriminations in question? Generally, it is simply a fact about our visual-system that in a certain set of e-conditions – e.g., when an object is seen from a certain distance, from a certain angle, in certain lighting conditions, while the subject’s visual-system is functioning normally, and her attention is distributed in such and such a way, etc. – that the experience of a given property provides the potential for certain discriminations and not others, and that this potential varies with relevant variations in e-

\textsuperscript{15} An appeal to the possibility of discrimination from other objects in favourable conditions is problematic. For it has to be assumed that we are appealing only to cases in which the changes in the actual e-conditions that are required for the conditions to become favourable for discrimination don’t affect the experience of the object’s shape in a way we’d regard as providing the subject with more (less) specific shape-information. This assumption is far from trivial.

\textsuperscript{16} There are considerations that suggest that it is a mistake to construe experiences – especially experiences of changes – in such a way that at each point in time an experience can be ascribed specific, fine correctness conditions, independently of the experiences that precede and those that follow the experience in question. (See Phillips 2011, Soteriou 2007). However, CC cannot appeal to these considerations since they undermine the view of correctness conditions which makes CC plausible.
conditions. In some cases this may involve new aspects becoming visible; thus, for example, when reduction of distance results in more specific shape-information, this may involve finer details of the shape becoming visible. But in many cases there are no specific aspects of the phenomenology we can point to which account for the potential being the specific potential it is rather than any other. As explained below, in some of the latter cases there is a relevant change in the phenomenology which generally corresponds to the change in potential but doesn’t account for it, but in some of these cases there just is no corresponding change in the phenomenology.

This answer may seem unsatisfactory. It may seem that the availability of the information to the subject has to be determined by the way things are presented to her as being; i.e., there should be no change in availability of information without a corresponding change in the way things are presented. It may further seem that it must be possible to explain any change in the information’s availability in terms of changes in the way things are presented to the subject. However, I suggest that there is no good reason to accept either claim.

Consider, first, cases in which the change in acuity is manifestable only in small changes in statistical discrimination-success in a very narrow range of circumstances. When the change is of this type, it is clear that there is no corresponding change in the phenomenology which the subject can somehow detect. In fact, even when the circumstances are optimal, and the change results in the subject’s making the relevant discrimination, her experience doesn’t provide her with awareness of a change in how the shape is presented to her that corresponds to the change in acuity. (I’m assuming that we should not talk about a change in the way things are presented to the subject if the subject cannot, at least in principle, be aware of it).
Next, consider cases in which the change in potential is still very fine but large enough for it to be the case that prior to the change in distance the subject was unable to detect a certain length-difference in optimal circumstances – say, a slight difference in length between two elongated objects when they are adjacent, equally oriented, the subject’s attention is focused on the relation between their lengths, etc. – whereas after the change she wouldn’t, in the same optimal circumstances, miss the difference.\footnote{I focus here on length because this is the simplest case to describe. We can assume that the length is the only aspect that varies and thus the length change entails a shape change.} It seems (to me at least) that in such cases as well there are no detectable changes in the phenomenology which explain in virtue of what there’s a change in the availability of information to the subject, whereas the changes which might be detectable are not as specific as the change in the availability of information (and thus do not determine it). Specifically, if there is no second object that differs from the observed object in the exact amount of length, which is adjacent to it, etc., then it seems that, at best, one may be able to recognize the change in the distance from which the length is observed. Arguably, when the length is presented in experience as the length of an object towards which the subject is moving, it is also part of one’s phenomenology that one is in a position to gather more specific and more accurate information from it (leaving open the question of whether this aspect of the phenomenology is wholly due to the perceptual experience or rather to a more general aspect of the way things are from the subject’s perspective). However, such changes in the phenomenology are clearly unsuitable for accounting for a change in the information available to the subject. Furthermore, it seems that ordinarily our experience of such changes isn’t specific enough to distinguish between fine differences in the amounts of change in acuity.

Now, it is relatively rare that a suitable object of comparison is present and in addition the conditions are optimal for detecting fine differences in length between the
compared objects. Thus, the above observations, if correct, show that the psychophysical facts, by themselves, do not give us a reason to think that any change in the availability of information to the subject (which is detectable in optimal circumstances) must be correlated with a similar change in the way things are presented to the subject as being, and in particular that the former is to be explained by the latter. Furthermore, even when the change in distance actually results in the subject’s detecting a length-difference which she didn’t (and couldn’t) detect prior to the change, it is far from clear that there is a change in the way each length is presented which can account for the difference in the available information, or which is specific to the exact amount of change involved in the particular case in question.

One might respond here that what we detect when we detect a length-difference is a certain relation between the lengths – e.g., O₁’s length being shorter than O₂’s. Consequently, according to my opponent, each of the two objects should be presented as having a specific length, since the relation between these two ways in which the object is presented is what constitutes the presentation of the objects’ lengths being so related. However, this view seems mistaken. Empirical data, and arguably also reflection on the phenomenology, suggest that things are often presented to us in experience as differing from each other in various respects without their being each presented as being a specific different ways (e.g., two objects can be presented as slightly differing in length without each, independently of its relation to the other, being presented as having a specific different length).¹⁸

Part of why it is natural to think that changes in acuity that are due to changes in e-conditions are correlated with changes in the way the relevant aspects are presented is, I suggest, that we don’t normally pay attention to whether or not the way things are

¹⁸ As there is no room to defend this claim here, I’ll simply assume it’s correct
presented changes when such minor changes in acuity take place. (In fact, it’s likely that we are aware of small changes in acuity only in virtue of noticing relevant small changes in e-conditions, and it is clear that we do not always notice the latter). On the other hand, the cases that are more salient to us are (i) those in which the change in acuity is large enough to yield a change in (relevant) properties whose possession by the object is manifest to the subject in the given circumstances – e.g., a change from round to octagonal (which isn’t presented as a change in the object but rather as one due to the change in relevant e-conditions); (ii) the special cases in which, due to the change in e-condition, the subject detects a relevant difference that she couldn’t detect prior to the change, and it is clear to her (due to the way things are presented in her experience) that the difference became apparent because of the change in e-conditions; (iii) cases in which the changes in acuity (e.g., with respect to shape) also involves change in the visibility of relevant fine details. I suggest, then, that on several occasions we are aware of the effects of large enough changes in e-conditions on the way objects are presented to us, and also of the fact that these changes involve a gradual change in relevant e-conditions. Consequently we simply take it for granted that there is a correlated specifiable change in the way the object is presented – a change that explains the corresponding change in the specificity of information from the objects – while we don’t notice the cases in which there is no such change.

Let me summarize the argument so far. I pointed out that when conditions, such as the subject’s distance from the object, affect acuity with respect to a certain dimension (e.g., shape) the information regarding the relevant dimension (e.g., shape-information) which is available to the subject from a certain object is the information that the relevant property of the object (e.g., its shape) is within a certain range $R_i$ (in a relevant
similarity-space). It thus seemed natural for a proponent of CC to hold that when this is the case the object is presented to the subject as being $F_i$— i.e., as being shaped/coloured/oriented/etc. in a way which is within a relevant range $R_i$. I argued that in cases in which $R_i$ varies with variations in constantly changing e-conditions ($R_i$ being the range of shapes/colours/orientations/etc. which are consist with the relevant shape/colour/etc.-information that is available to the subject in her present experience), our experience with respect to the relevant dimension is significantly different from our experiences in the paradigmatic cases in which we say that an object is presented in experience as having a certain property (e.g., being circular, daisy-shaped, etc.). In the latter, but not in the former, an object’s having the property is immediately manifested to the subject in experience (in the sense explained above).

Now, properties such as being circular and daisy-shaped are also $F$-properties; for example, an object is circular if its shape is within a certain range of shapes. Thus, if I’m right about the phenomenology, we have cases with correctness conditions that are specified in, basically, the same way (i.e., by specifying relevant $F$-properties) but have a different type of phenomenology. This, by itself, poses a challenge for the $F$-properties view; for, at least as the view has been described so far, it doesn’t offer a way to account for the existence of this difference. In the remaining part of this section, I’ll present further considerations which strongly suggest that CC is unsuitable for capturing the phenomenology in the acuity-change-cases.

To bring out the point of the considerations I’m going to present, it would be useful to have in mind a suggestions which, at first glance, seems to make room for the $F$-properties view to account for the phenomenal difference in question. CC’s proponents may suggest that the relevant phenomenal difference concerns the different ways in which an object is presented to the subject as having a certain $F$-property (thus a
difference that goes beyond what we need to specify in order to capture the way things are presented to the subject as being). And it may, further, seem that such an effect can be captured by distinguishing – like Peacocke (1992) – between levels of content – e.g., scenario content vs. proto-propositional or propositional content.¹⁹

Whether this suggestion may help CC depends on what kind of phenomenal difference can be captured by distinctions between levels of content. As far as I can see, as long as each level is a specification of part of the correctness conditions, the ways things can be that are mention at any of level is meant to capture a property (broadly construed) something is presented to the subject as being. However, the following considerations suggest that the finely discriminated F-properties which differ from the relevant paradigmatic cases are not among the properties (broadly understood) which objects are presented to us as having. If this is accepted, and if I’m right about how specification of correctness conditions can relate to the way things are presented in experience, then appeal to level of content cannot be of any use to CC. Note that the same response is in place if one suggests that the paradigmatic cases in which things are presented as having certain properties must involve conceptual elements. Let’s turn then to the argument.

To begin with, remember that the cases in which the object’s possession of the relevant property is immediately manifest to the subject (the cases we normally describe by saying that an object is visually presented to the subject as circular, daisy-shaped, red, etc.) seem to be paradigm cases of what we would describe as the object’s being visually presented to the subject as having a certain property. Our question, then, is whether certain cases that differ in their phenomenology from these paradigms – cases in which (i) the experience provides the subject with the information that the object has a certain

¹⁹ Acknowledgement.
property $F$ (in the sense that it provides her with the ability to, or makes it likely that she will, discriminate the object from non-$F$s in optimal circumstances), but (ii) the object’s being $F$ isn’t immediately manifest to her in her experience – should also count as cases in which the object is presented to the subject as being $F$. The type of the phenomenal difference – the fact that it has to do with whether or not the experience makes an object’s being $F$ immediately manifest to the subject – it seems intuitive to think that they should not.

Can we give some theoretical substance to this intuitive reaction? I take it that to say that an object is presented to the subject as having a certain property means that a certain aspect of the object is presented to the subject as an aspect which the object may share with other objects. Furthermore, I take it that for an aspect of an object to be presented in this way it is required that, generally, the subject takes it that in normal conditions her experience enables recognition of the relevant similarity between the object in question and further instances of the property. The immediate manifestness in the case of properties like circularity and redness does exactly this. It ordinarily enables recognition of the similarity of simultaneously presented instances of the property and can be the basis for recognition of similarity with objects encountered at other times, and we are generally aware of these facts when the properties are presented to us in experience. In contrast, the $F_i$-properties we’ve been considering are not presented in a way that provides us with such general ability to recognize similarity. At best we are provided with the ability to discriminate them from other seen shapes, and this only in very special conditions; and here too we are aware of these facts when we have the relevant experience.

We may also add to this that for an object to be presented to the subject as having a certain mind-independent property, the subject’s experience of objects as having this
property can’t be restricted to cases in which conditions that constantly vary in our ordinary interaction with the environment have a very specific value. In other words, the presentation of the property should be capable of a certain amount of constancy during ordinary continuous experiences. One way to support such a claim would be to argue that a visual presentation of a mind-independent aspect of an object (e.g., its shape, colour, etc.) as such involves the presentation of this aspect as something the subject can visually keep track of while e-conditions change in various ordinary ways. Such presentation, it may be argued, involves expectations as to how the experience will change with changes of the e-conditions and the object, and these, arguably, cannot be completely detached from the actual ways in which experience enables visual tracking while e-conditions and the object change. There is much more to say about this line of reasoning, as well as other ways in which one may argue for a link between constancy and being presented as mind-independent. However, I hope that enough has been said here to make it plausible that the ways things are presented to the subject in the acuity-change-cases isn’t captured accurately when it is described as a gradual change of the $F_i$-properties which the seen objects are presented to us as having; thus that the $F$-properties view, which seems the most natural view for CC to adopt, should be rejected. I turn next to the question of whether CC can respond to the criticism by proposing an alternative way in which a specification of correctness conditions can capture accurately the way things are presented to the subject as being.

3. Other solutions?
Suppose we agree that the $F$-properties view cannot capture accurately the effect that changes in acuity have on the ways objects are presented to the subject as being. Is
there an alternative account that CC can adopt? An immediate reason to think that no
such alternative exists is that, as argued in §2, the correctness conditions of an
experience can be finer than ways in which the relevant object(s) is(are) presented to the
subject as being (in the experience in question). The claim was that for fine changes in
acuity the specific differences in correctness conditions are differences in potential for
discrimination, and that in some cases changes in such potential occurs without any
Corresponding change in the way things are presented to the subject as being. One may
suggest, in response, that when the aim is to capture the way things are presented to the
subject, only coarser specifications (that is, coarser than the finest ones) of correctness
conditions should be taken into account. However, if this suggestion is to yield a
satisfactory version of CC, then there should be a non-ad hoc reason for drawing the
exact suitable distinction between the finer and coarser specifications, and taking only
the latter into account.

It seems rather unlikely that there is such a reason. I suggested that in many cases
the relevant change in the phenomenology is a change in the e-conditions that are
presented in experience (e.g., the distance between the subject and object decreasing, the
light getting brighter, etc.). And I suggested, further, that when an object is presented as
seen in such changing e-conditions, it is part of the phenomenology (though perhaps not
strictly of the phenomenology of the visual experience) that the current change in e-
condition makes it the case that there is a corresponding increase (or decrease) in the
specificity of the information which is presently available to her in experience, unless
other relevant e-conditions are changing in a way that has the opposite effect. If this is
correct, then the correctness conditions that are to be taken into account are determined
by the extent to which changes in relevant e-conditions are presented in the
phenomenology, and arguably also on what is taken by the subject to be changes (and
lack of change) in e-conditions that affect her acuity. This suggests that the principle which guides the classification of the correctness conditions is the aim of taking into account only the correctness conditions that correspond to the phenomenology. And if this is the case, the reference to correctness conditions seems contrived and pointless.

There are also problems regarding what exactly should be accepted as the relevant coarser correctness conditions, and whether the suggested division can be a general one or could only be made for particular experiences in particular situations. For the sake of the argument, however, let’s ignore the difficulties and ask whether there is any suitable (slightly coarser than the finest) specification of the correctness conditions – one which leaves out the finer differences that have no correlate in the ways objects are presented – that can capture the way things are presented to the subject.

The first thing to note is that the lesson from the discussion in §2 isn’t merely that the F-properties view is unsuitable for capturing the way things are presented to the subject. I argued that the properties which a thing can be presented to the subject as having need to be properties that can be immediately manifest to the subject in her experience – i.e., it should be possible for a subject to have experiences which make the resemblance between objects that have the property in question immediately manifest to her – (henceforth ‘manifestable properties’). We saw that properties that can form a series in which each property differs from its successor only slightly cannot all be manifestable. Thus, the way things are presented in the relevant acuity-change-cases cannot be captured by an account which construes the fine, gradual change as a series of changes from the properties things are presented as having at given time to slightly different ones being presented at a following time. Moreover, since the considerations in question apply to any series of properties that differ from each other in fine ways, CC
should avoid any suggestion that requires ascribing to the subject the ability to experience things as possessing very fine properties.

This requires CC to somehow capture the relevant fine changes in appearance in terms of manifestable properties (which, remember, includes relations of any order, thus also changes). In other words, they should be captured in terms of relatively coarse properties, which do not differ from each other too finely. An immediate question to ask is whether this is possible, given the facts about our experiences. More specifically, the question is whether the properties (broadly construed, thus including relations and changes) that are made manifest in an experience include a rich enough set of relevant properties to capture the relevant fine changes. A positive answer may appear likely when we consider everyday natural scenes. But it seems much less likely when we consider a sparse scene (e.g., the scene when a homogenously coloured square painted on a huge, smooth, white wall, etc., is observed from a distance of one meter).

Furthermore, empirical studies tell us that in rich, complex scenes we attend to a very small number of objects and properties at a time, while unattended parts of the scene are often not experienced at all, or are presented in experience in a much less specific ways than the ways we would experience them if we attended to them.\(^{20}\) Thus it is not even clear that experiences of natural scenes provide the richness of manifest properties required for accounting for the fine changes in the way an object’s appearance changes with the relevant small changes in acuity.

Pointing out the above mentioned facts is, of course, not yet to establish that the properties that are made manifest in ordinary experiences don’t suffice for capturing the relevant fine changes in experience, and this is not the place to try to establish this. There are, however, other reasons to think that even if the coarse properties that are

\(^{20}\) On the restriction on the number of objects we can attend to see, for example, Pylyshyn 1989; on the lack of awareness due to inattention see, for example, Mack and Rock 1998; on the effect of attention on specificity see, for example, Montagna et al. 2009 and Li et al. 2002.
manifested in an experience were sufficient to capture the relevant fine change in appearance, this would be of no use for CC. We should ask here what the proponent of CC is hoping to achieve by capturing the fine changes in the phenomenology by specifying sets of coarser terms. The suggestion cannot be simply that by specifying the relevant sets of coarser properties we are specifying complex properties which objects are presented as having, and that when, say, the subject moves closer to the daisy, it is presented as having more specific properties of this type. For this would be just another version of ascribing to the subject an experience of properties which are not manifestable. (I assume that manifestability isn’t closed under conjunction: the conjunction of manifestable properties need not itself be manifestable).

What, then, could CC achieve by the type of specification under discussion? We are assuming, for the sake of the argument, that there is a match between the conjunction of the manifestable properties specified and the fine changed in the experience, but it seems that CC doesn’t have a way to capture how the change is presented to the subject. That is, if the suggestion made on pp.11-12 was correct, then it doesn’t capture the fact that the subject experiences the change as a change in the amount of relevant information (e.g., shape-information) available to her from the object, due to the changes in e-conditions (e.g., her distance from the object). Perhaps the best route for CC to take here is to suggest that these aspects of the phenomenology are not strictly part of the way things are presented in the experience. The claim, then, would be that the specification of the correctness conditions gives us only the aspects of the phenomenology that are due to the experience in the strict sense.

Supposed we accept this way of separating the aspects of the phenomenology which are strictly due to perceptual experience from those that aren’t. Do we at last have an alternative to the $F$-properties view which is not obviously implausible and can count as
a genuine version of CC? I think not. What we have now is this. The correctness condition of an experience are determined by the information that the experience makes available to the subject, where such information includes (i) information that corresponds to properties that are made manifest to the subject in the experience in question, and (ii) finer information that doesn’t correspond to such properties. The specification of the relevant manifestable properties is a specification of the parts of the correctness conditions that correspond to (i). And it is suggested that we aren’t leaving out all the parts that correspond to (ii) (but rather only those that do not correspond to any change in the phenomenology) since these parts correspond to conjunctions of some of the manifestable properties that are mentioned in the specification. The problem, however, is that what the type-(ii) information is about isn’t at all close to the conjunctions of the manifestable properties in question. It is information about fine ways an object could be (e.g., fine shapes, shades of colour, orientations, etc.) which are said to be available to the subject in virtue of the potential for discrimination that the experience carries with it. The majority of the properties in the conjunctions we are considering, on the other hand, are either relations between the object and the environment which constitute e-conditions (e.g., the distance between subject and object) or relations between the object and certain e-conditions (e.g., the brightness of the light which comes from the left side of the object). The connection between the presented e-conditions and the information available to the subject – the subject’s taking the e-condition to have specific effects on the specificity made available to her by her current experience – was assumed, remember, to be an extraneous addition to the phenomenology of the experience.

There are two moves CC may make here. It may be suggest (1) that type-(ii) information isn’t relevant to determining correctness conditions, or (2) that when we
specify correctness conditions in order to capture the phenomenology of the experience, only the aspects of the correctness conditions that are determined by type-(i) information should be taken into account. As I explained on p.17, CC cannot adopt suggestion (1). Adopting (2), however, seems more like giving up CC, rather than offering a version of it (since what guides the decision as to what goes into the specification isn’t one’s view about what the correctness conditions of the experience are, but rather considerations regarding the phenomenology). Furthermore, one who adopts (2) will have to provide good reasons for holding that all other aspects of the phenomenology aren’t strictly part of the phenomenology of perceptual experience, which isn’t at all a trivial claim. Once again, then, we seem to have strong, though not conclusive, reasons for concluding that neither move could help CC.

I’ve been considering whether there is an alternative to the F-properties available to CC. My conclusion is that we have strong reasons to think that there isn’t, but that these reasons do not amount to a conclusive argument for this conclusion. I take it, however, that enough has been said to shift the burden of proof to the proponents of CC.

4. Where does this leave us?

I’ve been arguing that CC can’t capture accurately the way things are presented to the subject as being in cases in which acuity with respect to a certain dimension (e.g., shape, length, colour, etc.) constantly varies with e-conditions. Given the fact that several e-conditions which constantly vary during our ordinary interaction with the environment affect acuity in several dimensions, this conclusion, if correct, provides a good reason for rejecting CC. The pressure on CC becomes even clearer when we
remember that the fine-grained distinctions that experience enables us to make (e.g., fine distinctions of shape, shade of colour, length, etc.) are all dependent on the specific values of ‘acuity-relevant’ e-conditions that constantly change (e.g., the subject’s location in relation to the object, properties of surrounding objects and the background, the lighting, the focus of the subject’s attention, etc.). In other words, the extent to which a given experience enables us to make fine distinctions depends on our current acuity with respect to the relevant dimensions, which, in turn, depends on specific values of constantly changing e-conditions. Furthermore, the problem isn’t specific to what we would ordinarily regard as changes in acuity, but rather concerns any case in which variations in e-conditions systematically affect the amount of information from an object (or property-instance) which is available to the subject in experience. Thus, for example, the problem arises with regard to fine changes in the way things are presented which are due to changes in occlusion (the latter being due to changes in the spatial relations between subject and object).

The dependence of the availability of information on constantly changing e-conditions seems to be an essential part of the way vision (as it actually is) provides us with access to mind-independent objects and properties. To get a rough sense of what I mean by this consider the following facts about our visual experience.

(i) At any particular time our experience provides us only with partial information (relative to the information from the scene which is, in principle, available in visual experience).

(ii) The information available to us from an object during a brief perceptual encounter with it could be misleading.\(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\) As mentioned on p.5, as I use ‘information’ it includes misinformation.
(iii) Which information is available at a given time is determined by conditions that constantly change during our ordinary interaction with the environment, where some of these conditions – especially, our location in relation to the object and the distribution of our attention – can be, and constantly are, actively changed by us.

(iv) In most ordinary situations, experiences in which objects are presented as changing are usually veridical, and changes in the way an object is presented which are due to changes in e-conditions are presented as the type of change they are (and thus are not presented as changes in the object).

(v) There is a sense in which ordinary subjects know the above-mentioned facts and manifest this knowledge in their everyday interactions with the environment and in their reasoning about such interactions.

Given (i) and (ii), the mere fact that information from an object is immediately available to the subject at a particular time seems short of giving her access to the object its properties. However, due to (iii) and (iv) each episode of experience, even if very short, provides the subject with the possibility of keeping track of the experienced objects and gathering further information from them while manipulating e-conditions in ways which enable gathering more specific and more accurate information. And given (V) there is a sense in which the subject is aware of these possibilities. This, arguably, is a basis for a plausible account of the sense in which experience provides us with access to mind-independent things.

These points provide the background in relation to which my suggestion (in §2) as to how things are presented when acuity changes due to a change in e-conditions should be understood. Generalizing the earlier description that concerned acuity, we get the following rough description (which is meant to be merely a gesture in the right direction). From the subject’s perspective: (i) she is presented with the object and its
visible aspects – its shape, colour, length, distance from the subject and from other objects, etc.; (ii) she is provided with information regarding each of these aspects in the following sense, (a) she is continuously experiencing the object as having various relatively coarse-grained properties (being circular, non-angular, red, longer than the surrounding objects, etc.) and (b) she knows how to go about seeking answers to more specific questions, such as whether that [a certain object on the left] is exactly the same shape as that [a certain object straight ahead]. The knowledge mentioned in (b) involves knowledge of how shifting the focus of attention, moving towards and around objects, etc. can provide more specific information than the information currently provided, where the subject is aware that fine changes in the specificity of the available information are changes in potential to make relevant discrimination in optimal circumstances. What determines how the subject estimates her acuity in regard to certain aspect is a mixture of, at least, her general assumptions about the environment and how e-conditions affect acuity, the degree of her awareness of current changes in e-conditions and of diversions from the standard range of e-condition, the occurrence of unexpected success or failure in attempting to answer questions and gather further information. (As mentioned above, I leave open the question of whether the phenomenological aspects that (ii) is supposed to capture should be construed as aspects of the content of the experience or of a more general attitude towards the content.)

If the arguments in §2 and §3 are correct, then CC is unequipped for capturing this phenomenology. The question, then, is whether there is an alternative to CC. There seem to be at least two promising candidates. The first is what is often called ‘a relational account of experience’ – i.e. an account according to which the phenomenal character of the experience is, at least partly, constituted by the actual objects and properties
experienced by the subject.\textsuperscript{22} The characterization of the view immediately implies that a specification of the way things are presented to the subject must involve reference to the experienced objects (and their properties). In addition, to account for effects of $e$-conditions on the way things are presented to the subject, relationalists suggest that the obtaining $e$-conditions should also be mentioned in the specification.\textsuperscript{23} That is, they suggest that, since an object together with the obtaining $e$-conditions determine the way it is presented, specifying the $e$-conditions and the perceived objects should provide an indirect specification of the way the objects are presented. Two advantages of such a specification are immediately apparent. Since the relationalist isn’t concerned with the specification of correctness conditions, she need not worry about discrepancies between correctness conditions and the way things are presented. Furthermore, as the specification is indirect, she need not worry about the fineness of the descriptions of the $e$-conditions and objects.

Saying that on the relational view we specify, indirectly, the way things are presented by specifying the $e$-conditions and the perceived objects still leaves us with the need to say more about the exact way in the two are to be related – specifically, what determines exactly which properties objects are presented as having and other aspects of the phenomenology. So far, the most developed attempt to do this is Brewer’s (2011: 118-36). Whether or not his suggestion is successful, or whether there are other successful developments, is left here open. The point is that there seem to be no obvious constraints on such developments which raise doubts about the possibility of capturing accurately the way things are presented to the subject as being.

A relational account isn’t the only type of possible alternative to CC. A promising non-relational alternative would be to specify what is presented in experience by using

\textsuperscript{22} See Campbell 2002:114; Brewer 2011.
\textsuperscript{23} See Campbell 2008:§4; Brewer 2011:95-7.
singular terms – arguably these should be demonstrative devices of some sort – which do not entail the existence of their referents, and add to each singular term a specification of a mode of presentation that captures the way the intended referent is presented to the subject. Proponents of this suggestion could, like the relationalists, specify the particular modes of presentation in terms of the obtaining e-conditions (which, together with the intended referent, determine how it is presented).

These very brief comments on possible alternatives to CC are only meant to alleviate the worry that there are no plausible alternatives. The question of whether any of them can capture the way things are presented to the subject as being is left for another occasion. The aim in this paper is merely to argue that CC isn’t adequate for the job. As mentioned above, the argument I presented isn’t conclusive, but, if correct, it seems to shift the burden of proof to the proponents of CC.

References


\[24\] For the idea of a demonstrative element that is independent of the existence of a referent, and the claim that it should figure in the specification of perceptual content, see Burge 1983, 1993.

\[25\] I am indebted to Corine Besson, Bill Brewer, Steve Butterfill, Dorothea Debus, Naomi Eilan, Christoph Hoerl, Alex Kelly, Guy Longworth, Mathew Nudds, Ian Philips, Johanness Roesler., and Matt Soteriou for very helpful comments and discussions of earlier drafts. Versions of this paper were presented at the ESPP Meeting in Geneva, at the open Session of the Joint Session in Aberdeen, and at Warwick’s WIP seminar; I am grateful to participants for their comments. The work for this paper was carried out during a British Academy Research Postdoctoral Fellowship, and I am very grateful to the Academy for its support.


